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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify competency areas most problematic for students who did not complete their student teaching experience. Data were collected from case studies of 19 student teachers who did not complete the experience and 31 student teachers who did. Evaluations were based on objective competency measures and subjective narrative reports written by cooperating teachers. Findings demonstrate that student teachers who successfully completed the experience were rated significantly higher on all nine competency items of the objective measure; subjective narrative reports indicate that successful student teachers outperformed the nonsuccessful student teachers in the areas of personal qualities, human relations, and professionalism. Results suggest a need for preservice teacher education programs to focus on collaboration and interpersonal skills as well as on skills in interdisciplinary-partnership building. Appendices contain four tables which include demographics, analyses of variance, evaluations of checklist ratings, and percentages of positive and negative descriptive phrases in the narrative reports. (LL)

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Future Personnel Preparation for Special and General Educators: Pre-service Implications

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Running Head: Pre-service Implications

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Abstract

Case studies of 19 student teachers who did not successfully complete their student teaching experience and 31 student teachers who did successfully complete their student teaching experience were examined with regard to an objective competency measure and subjective narrative reports written by cooperating teachers. Results indicate that, for this population, the student teachers who successfully completed their student teaching experience were rated significantly higher on all nine competency items of the objective measure than the student teachers who did not successfully complete their student teaching experience. Subjective narrative reports indicate that the successful student teachers out performed the nonsuccessful student teachers in the areas of personal qualities, human relations, and professionalism. The need to focus on interpersonal communication skills during preservice instruction is discussed.

Introduction

Several critical issues will impact the personnel preparation of special and general educators as the 21st century approaches. These critical issues include: projected teacher shortages as early as the mid-1990s, increased numbers of non-traditional students entering teacher education programs, and greater emphasis in the schools on the Regular Education Initiative (R.E.I.) which requires more collaboration between special and regular educators. Preparing university students to meet the realities of these issues requires a preservice focus on competency in teaching, collaboration and interpersonal skills needed to work with others, and skills in interdisciplinary-partnership building.

This responsibility becomes of utmost importance during the students' professional teaching semester(s). It is during this time that the university instructor/supervisor, and the master teacher must evaluate students' performances in the area of: (a) teaching skills; (b) planning; (c) analyzing and self-evaluating teaching performance; and (d) learning from mistakes (Costa & Garmston, 1986). With thorough preparation, it is hoped that these students will apply what they learn, accept feedback, progress toward the successful completion of their student-teaching semester and become effective professionals in the area of education. Unfortunately, there are students who struggle through or fail the student-teaching semester. For these students,

failure can be translated into three or four years of course work, money, and time that seem to have been lost.

To avoid the many emotional and economic issues that surround the failure of a student teacher, researchers and academicians (e.g., Aydin, 1989; Young, 1989-90) have explored the possibility of whether individual behaviors or characteristics can predict the career success of a potential student. Behaviors, such as being well-prepared, being organized, speaking clearly (e.g., using many good examples) are noted as contributing to the success and tenure of a teacher (Hativa, 1984). Additionally, intelligence, achievement, aptitude, and the personality of the teacher (e.g., Pratt, 1986) as well as academic grades (e.g., Denton, 1983), pre-admission interviews (e.g., Breland, 1981), and biographical data (Baird, 1976) are variables that have been studied with regard to predicting success as a teacher. These efforts have yielded no consistent predictor of success.

If predictors of success seem inconsistent, the problem of trying to identify those behaviors that contribute to a student's completion of student teaching and eventually the tenure of that teacher still exists. Although it seems logical to try to identify the behaviors that lead to the success of a student teacher, another form of investigation may be to identify those behaviors that contribute to a student's failure. Through this avenue, researchers may find those behaviors that can contribute not only to the successful completion of

a teacher preparation program, but also contribute to the survival skills needed to achieve tenure and insure commitiment to the field of teaching.

The investigation of student failure may take many forms. The use of academic grades to assess whether students should progress or be counseled out of a program is the most common form of assessment and seems to have a high face validity when addressing student-teacher proficiency (Pratt, 1986). Pratt (1986) does note, however, that academic grades (as well as scores on the National Teacher Examination) only account for 2.4 % of the variance when measuring occupational criteria (e.g., income, job satisfaction, effectiveness ratings).

Another form of investigating student failure may lie with the evaluation of student teachers during their student teaching semester. Although few researchers have addressed this area of inquiry, reports indicate that investigators only considered student teachers' grades for the student-teaching semester and did not attend to detailed behaviors that could account for success, failure, or attrition of the student teacher.

The purpose of this investigation is three-fold in nature: (a) describe the model used to identify student teachers' behaviors that contribute to the success or failure of the student-teaching semester; (b) report the findings of the application of the model to both successful and non-successful field placement experiences; and (c)

discuss the conclusions and recommendations related to possible interventions/remediation strategies, coursework/teacher education programs, interpersonal skills development, and collaboration in preservice education for both special and general educators are discussed.

Method

Subjects

This study was an investigation of 19 cases of teacher preparation students who did not successfully complete their student teaching semester and 31 randomly selected cases of teacher preparation students who successfully completed student teaching. Student teaching, in each case, came during the final semester in the student's program. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the 50 students.

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Insert Table 1 about here
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Evaluation Materials and Measures

Evaluation checklist. A 64-item checklist was developed by the University of Hawaii Division of Field Services in conjunction with the Hawaii State Department of Education. This checklist was designed to identify behaviors that were deemed desirable and effective teaching behaviors. The targeted behaviors were catagorized as follows: (a) personal qualities (e.g., accepts praise and criticism objectively); (b) human relations (e.g., establishes favorable rapport with pupils);

(c) communication skills (e.g., uses correct grammar); (d) planning (e.g., plans appropriate daily learning experiences); (e) instructional methods/strategies (e.g., uses a variety of materials and activities); (f) classroom management (e.g., promotes student self-direction); (g) evaluation of students (e.g., maintains records or reports); (h) subject matter competency (e.g., demonstrates knowledge of major concepts...in content areas); and (i) professionalism (e.g., practices continuous self-evaluation, leading to improvement).

In addition to the Evaluation Checklist, a manual entitled an Evaluation of Student Teaching: Descriptors Manual accompanied the checklist. This manual was constructed to provide behavioral descriptions and examples of desirable and undesirable behaviors for each item on the evaluation checklist. Most cooperating teachers had been instructed on how to interpret each item on the checklist and how to use the descriptors when writing evaluation reports for each student teacher.

A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate each item on the checklist. A score of "1" indicated that the student teacher's performance was unacceptable, while a score of "5" indicated an outstanding performance.

Narrative report. In addition to completing the Evaluation Checklist, each cooperating teacher is required to submit a narrative evaluation of the student teacher. The purpose of the Narrative

Report is two-fold. First, the Narrative Report acts as a letter of recommendation for the student teacher. It is typically sent to administrators wishing to employ a teacher. A second purpose is to provide another form of evaluating the student teacher and is kept in the student teacher's permanent file. Because the cooperating teacher has had an opportunity to observe the student teacher's performance over a period of time, this evaluation is meant to provide a descriptive picture of a student teacher's strengths and weaknesses in the classroom.

Although the Narrative Report presents a subjective evaluation, cooperating teachers are instructed on how to write their reports. The instruction is provided through memos, workshops, and/or coursework offerings. Using this instruction, cooperating teachers are expected to provide descriptive information that fall under the categories of the competency items outlined by the Evaluation Checklist. The cooperating teachers were also instructed to be brief (two pages at most) and to focus on the outstanding strengths and the most pressing needs of the student teacher's performance. This information was communicated through the following structured narrative format:

a. Description of the setting;

b. Strengths/Competencies mastered;

c. Areas needing further improvement;

d. Statement of recommendation.

Evaluation Procedures

Student teaching evaluation. During the student teaching semester, each student teacher is evaluated by his/her cooperating teacher (i.e., a classroom teacher to whom the student teacher is assigned for the semester) and a college coordinator (i.e., a university supervisor who is required to visit the assigned classroom a minimum of five times during the semester as well as work with each student teacher during a weekly seminar session). Formal evaluations of student teachers are conducted two times during the semester: at mid-term and at the completion of student teaching. The mid-term evaluation is guided by the Evaluation Checklist and is intended to provide a progress report for use by the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, and the college coordinator. The final evaluation is a packet of documents which includes the Evaluation Checklist and the Narrative Report written by the cooperating teacher along with an Evaluation of Student Teaching Seminar and a Narrative Report written by the college coordinator.

Non-Completion of student teaching. When a student teaching semester is terminated for any reason (e.g., poor performance, illness), the following documents are required: (a) written statement from the student teacher; (b) Evaluation Checklist and/or written Narrative Report from the cooperating teacher; and (c) Narrative Report from the college coordinator. These documents become part of the

student teacher's placement file and are used to guide a remediation plan in the event that the student wishes to complete student teaching at a later date.

Data Collection Procedures and Interobserver Reliability

The data were gathered from the Evaluation Checklists for 14 of the 19 students who did not successfully complete their student teaching experience (termination took place before five midterm evaluations could be completed) and for 31 of the successful students. A Narrative Report was submitted for each of the 50 student teachers. These narrative reports were used to gather additional teaching performance information.

Mean evaluation checklist ratings. After each student teacher's Evaluation-Checklist had been scored (on a one- to five-point Likert scale) by the cooperating teachers, the item ratings were added together to attain the "Total Score" for the checklist item. The mean scores for each item was then calculated by dividing the total number of student teachers into the "Total Score" attained and multiplying by 100. Thus, an overall mean score for each Evaluation-Checklist Item was obtained for the group of successful student teachers and the group of unsuccessful student teachers.

Statistical analysis of evaluation checklist ratings. The SPSSx Manova procedure was utilized to assess differences between the successful and nonsuccessful groups on the nine competency items of

the Evaluation Checklist. The Manova procedure yielded: (a) Box's M multivariate test for homogeneity of dispersion matrices; (b) Cochrans C and the Bartlett-Box F univariate tests for homogeneity of variance; (c) results of the multivariate test of significance between the two groups; and (d) results of the univariate tests of significance between the two groups.

Narrative Report analysis. A content analysis was performed on the cooperating teachers' written Narrative Reports for all 50 of the student teachers. The analysis consisted of: (a) identifying descriptive phrases throughout the Narrative Report; (b) categorizing the descriptive phrases into the nine competency areas used on the student teaching Evaluation Checklist; (c) classifying discriptive phrases as positive or negative; and (d) tallying the number of positive and negative descriptive phrases under each competency area category of the Evaluation Checklist.

Interobserver reliabilty was determined on the categorization of the descriptive phrases into the nine competency areas. Two observers independently categorized the descriptive phrases for all of the 19 (100%) student teachers who were unsuccessful in completing their student teaching experience and for 22 (71%) of the student teachers who were successful in completing their field experience. Reliability between the two observers was assessed item-by-item according to the agreement or disagreement of the two observers. The percentage of

agreement for each group of student teachers was computed by dividing the total number of agreements by the total possible number of agreements and multiplying by 100 to obtain the percentage of agreement. The overall percentage of agreement was 91% for the student teachers who were unsuccessful in completing their field experience and 83% for the student teachers who were successful in completing their field experience.

Results

Evaluation Checklist

Table 2 contains the results of the multivariate analysis of variance. Examination of these results indicates a significant difference between successful and nonsuccessful groups on the nine competency items of the Evaluation Checklist. (Note that a violation to the homogeneity of dispersion matrices assumption underlying multivariate analysis of variance occurred).

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Insert Table 2 and 3 about here

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Table 3 contains the results of the univariate tests of significance for each of the nine competency items of the Evaluation Checklist. Significant differences were found between successful and nonsuccessful groups of all nine competency items. (Cochrans C and Barrtlett-Box F tests were not significant for each of the nine

competency items, indicating no violations to the homogeneity of variance assumption underlying analysis of variance.)

Results of the Evaluation Checklist are descriptively represented in Figure 1. The overall mean performance rating (across all competency items) for the successful student teachers was 4.4 (with a range of 2.5 to 5.0) on a five-point Likert scale. The overall mean performance rating (across all competency items) for the unsuccessful student teachers was 2.6 (with a range of 1.0 to 3.5) on a five-point Likert scale.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Narrative Report

The percentages of positive and negative descriptive phrases in the Narrative Report are represented in Table 4. Each percentage was obtained by adding the number of positive or negative descriptive phrases tallied under each competency area, dividing by the total number of poitive or negative descriptive phrases obtained from the content analysis. The highest percentages of positive descriptive statements given to successful student teachers were under the competency items of personal qualities (32%), human relations (19%), and professionalism (16%). In combination, these three competency areas account for 67% of the total positive descriptive phrases. In comparison, student teachers who did not successfully complete their student teaching experience showed low percentages of positive

descriptive phrases and high percentages of negative descriptive phrases in the following areas: (a) personal qualities (16%); (b) human relations (10%); (c) professionalism (13%); (d) classroom management (11%); and (e) effective planning (17%). In combination, these five competency areas also account for 67% of the total negative descriptive phrases for the students who were not successful.

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Insert Table 4 about here
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Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify competency areas most problematic for students who did not complete their student teaching experience. Data were collected from cooperating teachers' evaluation reports of 19 student teachers who did not complete their student-teaching semesters and 31 student teachers who did complete their student teaching semesters during the three academic semesters.

The results from the Evaluation Checklist indicate that, for this group of student teachers, the competency areas distinguish between the student teachers who did and did not successfully complete their student teaching experience. Although the analyses yielded highly significant differences between successful and nonsuccessful students on the Evaluation Checklist, the results will be treated as exploratory outcomes and interpreted with some caution due to the: (a) small sample

size utilized in the study; (b) unequal group sizes; and (c) violation of the multivariate assumption of homogeneity of dispersion matrices. Given these limitations, further research in this area is needed.

The results from the Narrative Report indicate that the competency items of qualities, professionalism, classroom management, and human relations were most problematic for the students who did not successfully complete their student teaching experience. Each of these competency areas require the use of selected interpersonal skills. For example, if a student is having problems in the competency area of "planning," it is the cooperating teacher's (and college supervisor's) responsibility to give corrective feedback to the student. If the corrective feedback is received (competency item under personal qualities) in an unacceptable manner, the interpersonal interactions between the student and the cooperating teacher may be strained. The inability for a cooperating teacher and a student teacher to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of teaching performances can reduce the progress made by the student teacher.

In comparison to the unsuccessful students, the students who did complete their student teaching semesters were reported to have strengths in the areas of personal qualities, human relations, and professionalism. The frequency of other strengths were not reported as high as these particular competency areas. Although one might conjecture that the successful students did have other teacher

strengths, the cooperating teachers elected to focus on the interpersonal skills of the student teachers as being the competencies that contributed to their being most successful. Perhaps, these students were able to accept criticism from their cooperating teacher, respond to the criticism (make changes), interact with pupils in a positive manner, interact with other teachers in a cooperative manner, and exhibit enthusiasm and interest in classroom/school activities. These behaviors, as well as others, may contribute to student teachers' making the progress that lead them to the successful completion of their student teaching.

Interestingly, when one examines the results of the Evaluation Checklist and the Narrative Reports for the students who did not complete their student teaching, the competency area of "effective planning" was reported as the most frequent problem area while the area of "subject matter competency" was ranked as having fewer problems. Although, it may seem logical to think that the two competency areas should be related, the Narrative Reports did not indicate this idea to be true. Deshler and Schumaker (1987) corroborate these results by stating that, due to insufficient preservice training, many content-oriented teachers (especially at the secondary level) do not know <u>how</u> to teach content material to students. Preservice training often focuses on the acquisition of the <u>content</u> rather than the teaching of the content. Deshler and Schumaker suggest that preservice training

place a higher emphasis on the competency of teaching effectivness (i.e., planning and execution).

In contrast, though, the results of the Evaluation Checklist and the Narrative Reports for the successful students did not indicate that these students had a great deal of strength in the area of planning and subject matter competencies. In each of these areas, however, the cooperating teachers did not report weaknesses. Either the students demonstrated sufficient progress in this area, or they were able to demonstrate these competencies throughout the semester.

In conclusion, preservice programs may need to focus their attentions on the competency areas of planning and execution of a lesson as well as effective interpersonal communication skills of their student teachers. The need to attend to interpersonal communication skills may focus on the student teacher's ability to give and accept criticism appropriately, negotiate, give and accept positive feedback, problem solve in a collaborative manner, and exhibit nonverbal behaviors that communicate friendliness and enthusiasm (e.g., smiling), as well as interest in others and their job (e.g., eye contact, active listening, etc.). These skills, and others, may contribute to the student teachers' ability to improve teaching skills, build interpersonal relationships with other teachers, and develop a network that will support them in their continued growth and development.

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Table 1

Demographic information for successful and unsuccessful student teachers

Demographic Information: Nonsuccessful N = 19		Demographic Information: Successful N = 31	
Sex:	Male = 12 Female = 7	Sex:	Male = 10 Female = 21
Age:	21-25 years = 9 26-30 years = 5 31-40 years = 2 41-60 years = 3	Age:	21-25 years = 22 26-30 years = 3 31-40 years = 3 41-60 years = 3
Level of Study:	Elementary = 11 Secondary = 8	Level of Study:	Elementary = 22 Secondary = 9
Ethnicity:	Hawaiian = 2 Japanese = 8 Filipino = 1 Chinese = 1 Caucasian = 6 Korean = 1	Ethnicity:	Japanese = 15 Filipino = 1 Chinese = 3 Caucasian = 6 Ethnic Mix = 3 Other = 3

Table 2

Results of Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Test Name	Value	Exact f	Hypoth. df	Error df	Sig of f
Pillais	.796	11.714	11.00	33.00	.000
Hotellings	3.905	11.714	11.00	33.00	.000
Wilks	.204	11.714	11.00	33.00	.000

Table 3

Results of Univariate Analysis of Variance. Variable descriptors are as follows: PQ = Personal Qualities; HR = Human Relations; CS = Communication Skills; TEP = Teacher Effectiveness/Planning; IMS = Instructional Materials and Strategies; CM = Classroom Management; SE = Student Evaluation; SMC = Subject Matter Competency; PR = Professionalism.

Univariate F Test with 1,43 df Variable	Hypoth. SS	Error SS	Hypoth. MS	Error MS	F	Sig of F
PQ	3588.86	1374.39	3588.86	31.96	112.28	.000
HR	2768.39	1758.41	2768.39	40.89	67.70	.000
CS	1795.10	1777.21	1795.10	41.33	43.43	.000
TEP	3583.72	1671.26	3583.72	38.87	92.21	.000
IM	3285.21	1640.79	3285.21	38.16	86.09	.000
CM	3702.92	1863.39	3702.92	43.33	85.45	.000
SE	3506.18	2421.60	3506.18	56.32	62.26	.000
SMC	3479.11	1840.80	3479.11	42.81	81.27	.000
PR	4073.15	1770.05	4073.15	41.16	98.95	.000

Figure 1. Evaluation Checklist Ratings

Variable descriptors from the Evaluation Checklist are as follows: PQ = Personal Qualities; HR = Human Relations; PR = Professionalism; SE = Subject Matter Competency; CS = Communication Skills; TEP = Teacher Effectiveness/Planning; IMS = Instructional Materials and Strategies; CM = Classroom Management; SMC = Subject Matter Competency.

Evaluation Checklist Ratings

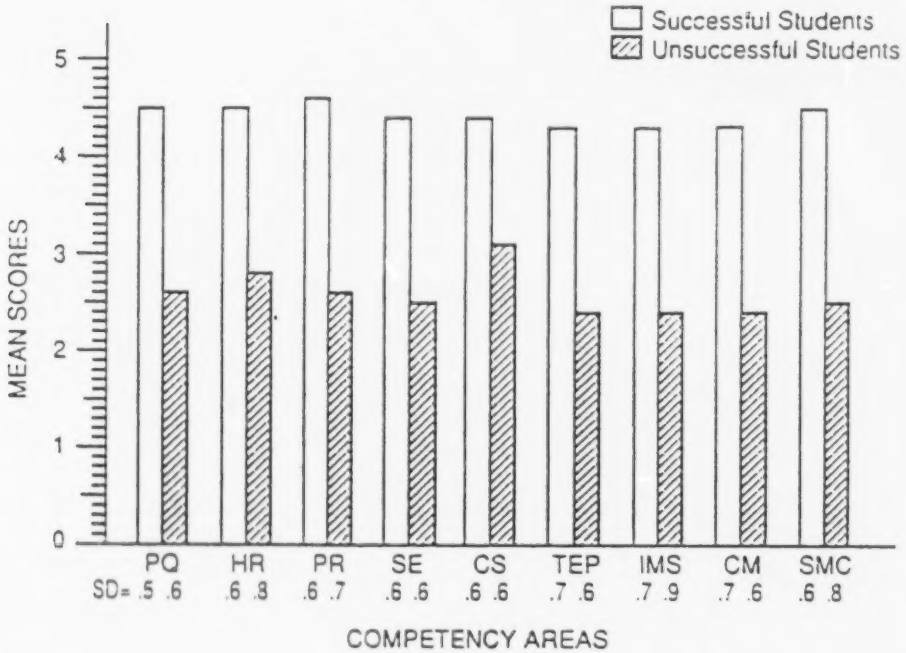

Table 4

Percentage of Positive and Negative Descriptive Phrases in the Narrative Results.

Competency Item	Positive & Negative Statements for Successful Student		Positive & Negative Statements for Unsuccessful Student	
	+	-	+	-
Personal Qualities	32%	0	3%	16%
Human Relations	19%	0	2%	10%
Professional	16%	.4%	0	13%
Instructional Materials & Strategies	10%	0	7%	6%
Classroom Management	9%	2%	0	11%
Effective Planning	6%	0	1.4%	17%
Subject Matter Competency	3%	.4%	2%	7%
Communication Skills	1%	0	0	7%
Student Evaluation	1%	0	.5%	2%